

From **Oluseye Ojo**,
Ibadan

Jailbreak: 1 soldier, 2 others feared dead

...As gunmen attack Oyo Correctional Centre

- Injure many, free 837 inmates
- 262 escapees recaptured, 575 still at large
- Prison authorities keep mum on high profile inmates held in facility

THREE persons, comprising a soldier, an inmate and Amotekun Corps member lost their lives, while many others, including an Amotekun Corps member, were critically injured when gunmen invaded Medium Security Custodial Centre, Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS), Abolongo, Oyo town in Oyo State around 10:00p.m. on Friday October 22.

The security personnel that died or injured, as gathered, were attached to the Correctional Centre to provide security. The soldier was attached to Operation Burst. A pick-up van, belonging to Operation Burst, which is a joint security network of Oyo State, was sighted at Abolongo riddled with bullets just as bloodstain was seen in the vehicle.

But the inmate that lost his life during the commotion reportedly tried scaled the fence of the centre, but could not make it as he landed on the ground on the other side of the fence.

The security personnel attached to the facility reportedly engaged the gunmen in a fierce duel with a view to repelling them for about 20

minutes, but the gunmen were said to have overpowered them and gained entry into the yard after using dynamite to blow open the wall.

The attackers, as gathered, used grenades and other explosives to gain access into the awaiting trial section of the facility before setting free many of the awaiting trial inmates. But the other sections of the facilities were said to have been left untouched.

Sunday Sun reliably gathered that a total of 837 inmates were freed by the gunmen that came in large numbers on motorcycles. But as at the time of filing this report, the authorities of the NCS disclosed that a total of 262 escapees had been recaptured, while 575 of them are still at large.

But some of the escaped inmates reportedly returned to the centre by themselves. One of them was said to have come back with bread and beans, saying: "I know that with what happened, there will not be good for us for some days.

This is why I went out to get food so that I will not starve."

When this reporter visited the attacked facility on Saturday, it was observed that observatory towers, residence of the head of custodial centre, and the iron door at the entrance of the main building of the centre were severely damaged with bullets and explosives.

But journalists were not allowed to enter the main custodial centre, where the inmates are being kept in different cells to assess the extent of damage done by the gunmen.

The Controller of Corrections, NCS, Oyo State Command, Mr Noel Ailewon, who initially spoke through the command's spokesperson, Olanrewaju Anjorin, said that journalists were not allowed entry into the facility because the place was being treated as a crime scene.

He added that the Oyo Custodial Centre was established in 2007 with a capacity of 160 inmates, but at the time of the attack, the facility had a total

population of 907 inmates, out of which awaiting trial persons were 837, representing 92 per cent, while 64 are convicts.

Two among the high profile inmates, remanded at Abolongo Custodial Centre, are the alleged territorial warlord and kidnapping kingpin of Ibarapa area of the state, Iskilu Wakili, and the suspected serial killer that terrorised many communities in Akinyele Local Government Area of the state between May and August 2020, Sunday Sodipe.

But the authorities of the NCS in the state said that they would not mention names of the inmates, adding that high profile inmates "are still in the cells."

Addressing journalists thereafter, Ailewon explained that the gunmen that attacked the facility stormed the place around 10:00p.m on Friday October 22, 2021, came in large numbers and attacked the centre with sophisticated weapons.

Ailewon stated that he was

informed about the incident around 10:05p.m., by the head of the custodial centre, adding that there were varying degrees of injury, but could only confirm the death of the inmate that attempted to escape.

He added that following the Controller General of Corrections, Haliru Nababa's directives, he has commenced the process of search and recapture, after visiting the scene of the incident.

He assure that no effort would be spared to recapture the fleeing inmates, even as he solicited credible intelligence to aid security agencies in tracking down the escapees.

Shortly after the interview with Ailewon, recaptured inmates were brought into the facility in one mini-black maria and a big black maria as well.

The Director General of Operation Burst, Col. James Oladipo (rtd), said that the injured soldier was not dead as at 1:30p.m yesterday, saying, however, that the soldier was critically injured and he was

not sure if he could survive the injury.

An impeccable source, who did not want his name in print, however, confirmed the soldier's death at 4:00p.m to Sunday Sun.

But a group of soldiers that sat under a tree at the premises of the facility told journalists that one of them was killed by the gunmen.

The Commandant of Amotekun Corps in Oyo State, Col. Olayinka Olayanju (rtd) told journalists on phone that one Amotekun Corps member died during the gun duel, while another sustained critical injury.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola, has said that he has been briefed on the attack, disclosing that he is monitoring the situation.

A statement issued by his Media Adviser, Sola Fasura, stated that Aregbesola has assured members of the public to go about their normal businesses as the situation is under control, adding that the minister has also asked members of the public to report any suspicious movement or any sign of the escaped inmates and the gunmen in and around the vicinity to the nearest security post around them.